

First, thank you for inviting me to speak here in front of you and to tell you about myself; my name is Ethan McCabe. I'm a specialist in the Connecticut Army National Guard and a veteran student at the University of Connecticut. I grew up around the greater Hartford area, so the campus being close and in an area I know well made it an easy choice. My Aunt and Uncle both attended the University of Connecticut and my uncle played football for the school, which also influenced my decision to attend UConn. My father is a prior active duty Army veteran and my mother came to the US as a child from Portugal. I am also a first generation college student. From the very beginning UConn has been nothing but flexible with the chaos that can come with balancing a civilian and military life. Right out of high school I was able to attend my Fall 2019 courses, but my ship date for Basic Training was January 6th, 2019. This hindered me from being able to attend the Spring semester of the same year. When I told UConn I needed a military leave of absence and that I'd like to continue my education upon my return, I received help with accomplishing all of the necessary steps to help me return in the Fall semester of 2020. I thought from there, it'd be smooth sailing to finish all of my schooling in one shot, but I was wrong. I was able to return for one more semester but again had to inform UConn I would be deploying and would need a leave of absence, and I had their full support. My unit, Delta Co. 1-102nd INF REGT, deployed to the Horn of Africa. I spent just shy of a year overseas. Upon my arrival home I informed UConn I would be returning in the fall of 2022 and UConn took me back with open arms as if I had never left. The cornerstone in all of this transition, in advocating and assisting military and veteran students, is the UConn Veterans Affairs Office. What UConn was able to help me with the most was my transition back to civilian life. I have always been extroverted, able to talk to anyone but, when I came back I didn't know how to interact with my peers or be in a social space. The students, staff, professors, and fellow veteran students helped me reintegrate to a way of life I had grown unaccustomed to. The veterans Oasis is a space for myself and other military affiliated students to go to take a breather from the world. We are able to have our own space and connect with one another on a personal level to help one another with struggles we may be having or to relieve the stressors of the day. The feeling of community I had and the help I received was the main reason I chose to get involved in the VA work study program. I am able to assist other students much like UConn and the other students have assisted me. UConn and the UConn Veterans Affairs Office have made it possible for me to continue my education and serve my community, my state, and beyond. Thank you for your time today, and for your continued support.